NAQCC News

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1. SPRINT: Our sprint is this Tuesday evening, Feb. 12th at 8:30-10:30 PM EST (Wednesday 0130-0330Z).

This month our sprint should appeal to those who design and build your own rigs. The special award goes to the one turning in the highest score with a rig built from scratch. NO KITS. You must gather all the parts yourself from one or more sources, and build the rig yourself.

Let's keep up the great participation. We are averaging over 50 logs submitted for our last several sprints. You folks are great! That's a much better participation than from organizations having many more members than we do. I am both pleased and yet disappointed that the FISTS Saturday afternoon sprint last fall had only 37 members report their results. Pleased because our members topped that by quite a margin. Disappointed that more FISTS don't participate and report their scores in the FISTS sprints. Both clubs are working toward a similar goal in slightly different ways. That is promoting the use of CW on the ham bands.

There are the usual prizes and certificates topped off by our monthly giveaway of the CW books on CD donated by Chuck K7QO. Chuck is currently considering a change in the giveaway. We'll post full details when they become available. The CD's are given free to the member (officers not included) making the highest score in the sprint who hasn't won the CD's previously.

When the sprint is over, please submit your results and log via our autologger. It has speeded up reporting of results so much we are considering changing our log submission deadline by shortening it by a couple days or so. Last month all logs were here almost 3 days before the deadline.

If you're entering one of our sprints for the first time, we welcome you and hope you will be a regular participant from now on. Last month we welcomed N8WS, WA8HSB, NA4O, WA8SAN, N0VA, W6GY, NF9D, N9QU, KA2Q, K6CSL, and KD5ZKU as first time participants and/or log submitters.

Our last newsletter was published before all the 160M special sprint results were in. Briefly that sprint was won by KG4W with a Carolina Windom antenna at 130 feet. He put out a signal that you would expect from such an antenna and gathered far more QSO's with it than any other member. The second place certificate went to John KA8MPT with another consistently strong signal. 20 logs were submitted, down a bit from 2007. No cross-checking of logs took place so we don't have a total number of participants who showed up in the logs.

Full Sprint info here.

2. JANUARY CHALLENGE RESULTS: Once again our challenge submission deadline comes after this newsletter is posted. However the partial results are very encouraging and somewhat surprising. Several members really dug into this challenge and came up with some very impressive scores. Currently K3WWP holds first place with 1,739 points followed by NU7T with 702 points. That could still change as other members shuffle letters and numbers around trying to get the most call signs made from their January QRP QSO's. Final results next newsletter or check the web site after 2400Z or so on the 10th.

The winner of the bug/paddle handles (donated by Gregg WB8LZG) drawing will also have to be announced later. You can see examples of the handles on Gregg's web site.

Full challenge info including my tutorial/work sheet for our alphabet style challenges here.

3. GENERAL CLUB NEWS: - One member asked why we bother to send out an email newsletter announcing publication of our on-line newsletter. Well, quite simply, in this busy world today, many of us (I know from personal experience) tend to forget things, and the email is just a friendly little reminder to check out the on-line newsletter. There is much info in these newsletters that is not available anywhere else, and we want as many members as possible to check them out. Also in addition to announcing the newsletter, they serve as a promo for our upcoming sprint and challenge similar to what the ARS does in announcing their monthly sprint.

- Mark NK8Q sends us this sad news, "Mac, W2TI, passed away on Friday, February 1, 2008." See more info in Mark's member news item below. Our deepest sympathy to all of Mac's family and friends. I see I had one QSO with Mac in the 2006 Hootowl Sprint. Mac was #0815.

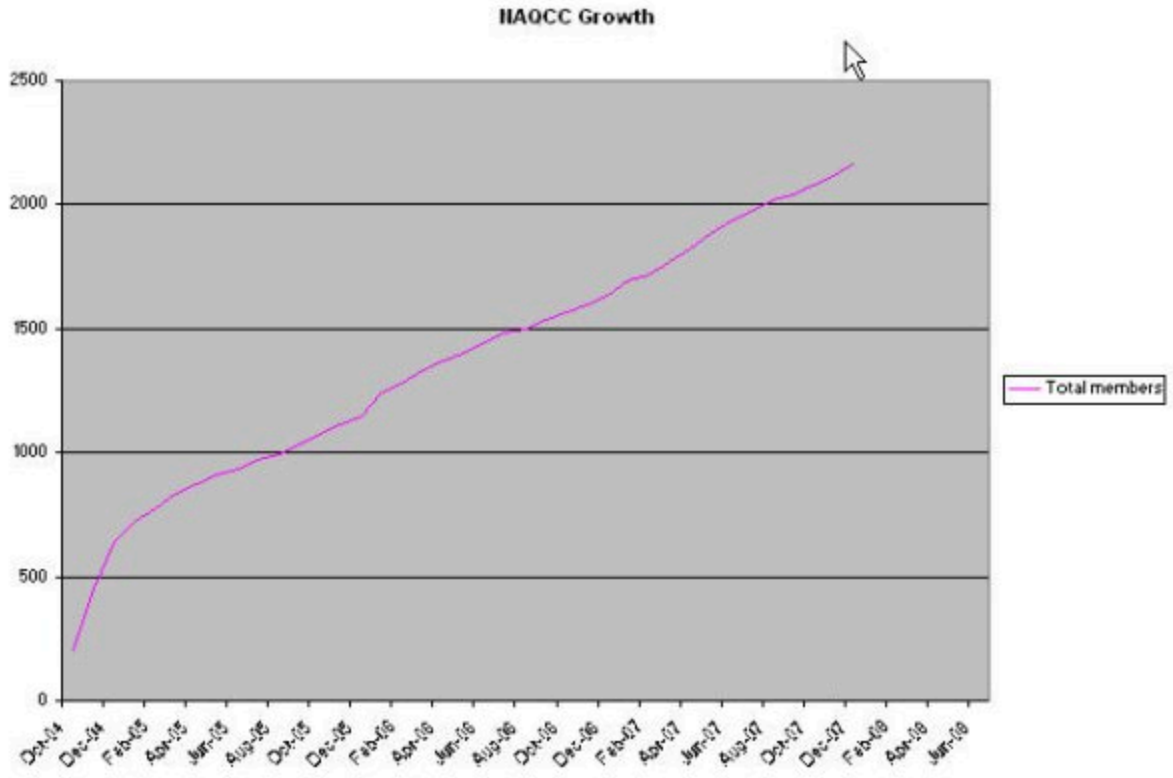
- I think a lot can be said about our club by comparing our results to similar results from other clubs. I've done that with our sprints, and we stack up very well in that regard thanks to you, our wonderful members and your dedication to the NAQCC. Now there's another comparison for which you all get a very big pat on the back. I was talking to our member Mike KC2EGL who is also a SKCC member. I asked him how their anniversary special event in January went. He said they made around 4800 QSO's total. Now consider they have almost twice as many members as we do, AND they run power outputs in most cases from 100 watts up to the full legal limit. I think our just under 1200 QSO's with our special event stations in October running 5 watts or less stacks up very well against their total. So congratulations to all our NAQCC members for a great performance.

- I was especially delighted on the first of February when I worked my long-time friend Ken WA8REI. Why? Well, besides the fact I always enjoy talking with Ken, this QSO was very special because, as many of you I'm sure already know, Ken suffered a stroke early on the

morning of January 10th, and I was concerned for him. Hearing him answer my CQ was a true joy for me. Ken told me about his experience with the stroke in our QSO. He's in a wheelchair and his CW is a little slower than usual, but he is recovering nicely. He sent a picture of himself the first day home (January 31), and he looks great for someone who suffered a stroke just 21 days before. We wish you continued recovery Ken, and look forward to many more years of ham radio CW/QRP activity from you. If you'd like to send Ken a note, use the address/email address on QRZ.com.

- We've had no response from any European members about a possible EU version of our sprint, so I guess that idea will be put to rest. Maybe we'll try again when the sunspots liven up the bands again, just like we may do with the currently hibernating Bear Hunt.

- Every so often, I like to let you know how our club is continuing to grow. Here's a little chart that shows our progress in signing up members:



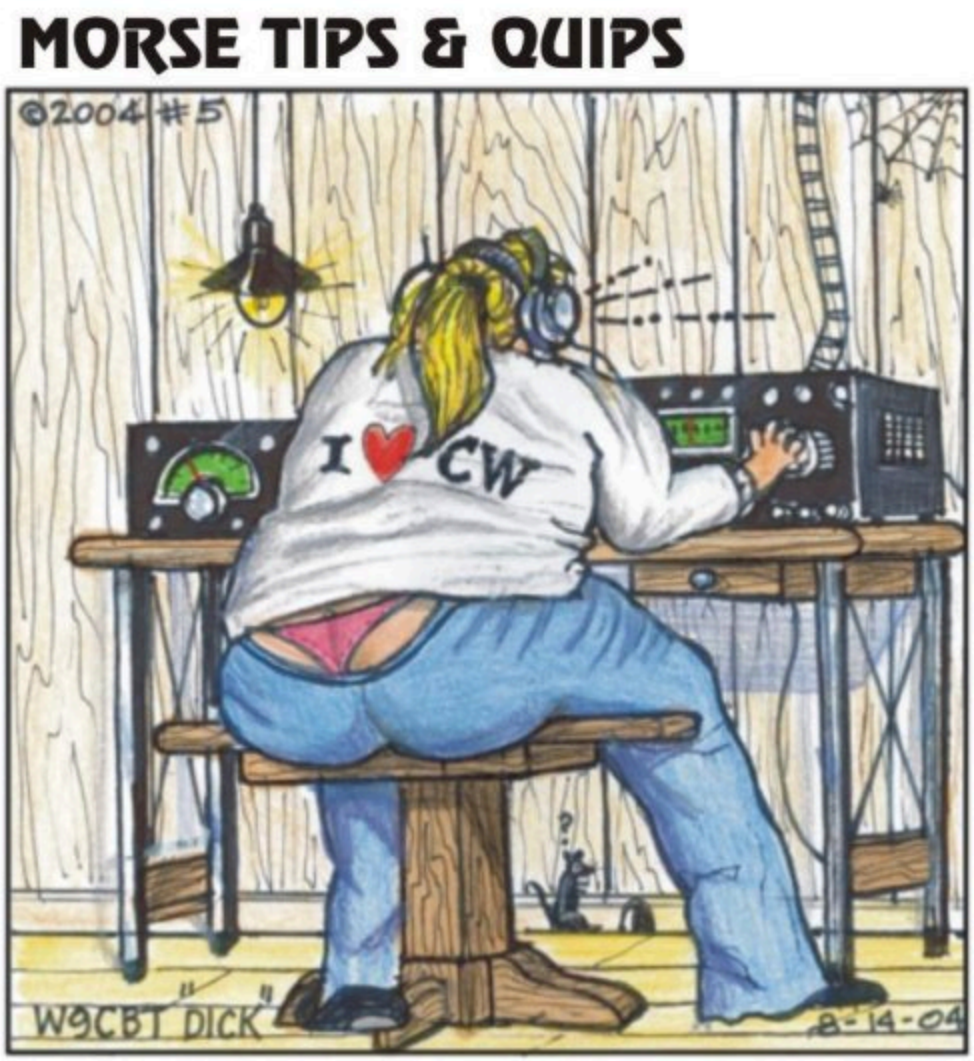
I find it remarkable and delightful that our growth rate is still continuing at a steady rate after already signing up so many members. Much of the growth is due to you, our members, referring others to the club. Each application we receive lists info about how the applicant found out about the club. A significant percentage of the applicants list another member as the source. So it is very important that you 'talk up' the club in any way that you can. Some ways you can do that are in your on-air QSO's, your web site if you have one, postings to the Internet, comments in other clubs' soapboxes, on your QSL card, at local club meetings.... The list is only limited by your imagination. Thank you for your efforts in the fight to preserve CW by recruiting new members to the cause.

- Several of our members posted impressive scores in last Fall's QRP ARCI contest. I'd like to mention a few here and offer them congratulations on behalf of all our officers and members. N4BP #1306 took first place, WA4DOU #0108 was 3rd, W0NTA #0915 5th, N3A/3 (Op K3OQ #0025) 7th, VA3RKM #0982 8th, VE3KZ #0899 9th, AB4PP #0118, 10th. As you continue down the list on the QRP ARCI web site you'll see many more members listed there.

Also what I like to see are the mentions made in the QRP Quarterly soapbox comments about the NAQCC.

- It also seems N3A/3 may have been the top QRP/CW-only scorer in October's PA QSO Party. Web site results are still preliminary and not completely categorized yet. N3A/3 made 85,890 points. Two other QRP entries had higher scores, but they also operated SSB to add to their scores. K3NG had 130 SSB and 282 CW QSO's, NK8Q had 108 SSB and 284 CW QSO's, N3A/3 had 0 SSB and 294 CW QSO's. It also looks like N3A/3 beat all but 4 Lo-Pwr/CW-only entrants as well. We'll have to wait till results are finally finalized to see how all this comes out, but there shouldn't be all that much change, if any, from the preliminary scores posting. It will just be easier to analyze when the results are more clearly categorized. K3WWP was the N3A/3 op in this contest. Our President Tom WY3H is looking to be a winner in the first-time entrant category, and (im?)patiently awaiting for the results to be finalized and that category shown in the results.

4. CW CARTOON OF THE MONTH: Let's take a comedy break now courtesy of Dick Sylvan W9CBT. Dick has been a long-time QRP/CW operator. One of his many talents is being a cartoon artist, and he is supplying a cartoon each month for the newsletter. The NAQCC is very honored to become the third organization to feature Dick's cartoons in their publications. Dick's cartoons appear monthly in The K9YA Telegraph, an on-line only Ham Radio E-zine and also in RadCom Magazine, the British Ham Radio publication. Dick has also authored a book entitled "Hi Hi - A Collection of Ham Radio Cartoons" available via his web site at http://www.k9ya.org/w9cbt/. A new cartoon will be appearing in each of our even-numbered newsletters.



5. MEMBER NEWS: A couple of you responded to my urging that you shed your humility and send in some news about what you've been doing with QRP/CW. Thanks for that, but we need still more news for this section. Finding out what other members are doing in a club is very important. That can only be done if you let us know what you are doing, so.....

Send your news items to our news editor Paul KD2MX at **KD2MX@ARRL.NET**.

- **From John K3WWP #0002 -** I had a lot of fun in the recent CQ 160M contest. With the incentive of working stations to get numbers and letters for our NAQCC January challenge, I put in 5 hours of operating time and made 157 QSO's in 30 SPC's. 160M was in superb condition and if I had devoted more time to the contest, I probably could have topped my personal record for a CQ 160M contest which is 208 QSO's back in 1996 or even my ARRL 160M record of 251 QSO's back in 1995. That 1995-1996 winter was great for 160M just as is this 2007-2008 winter. Both came near or at a sunspot minimum since that is the best time for good low band conditions contrary to the high bands which are best at a solar maximum. I heard more EU stations in this contest than I think I've heard in all the time listening on 160. However there was no way to work them against the competition with my minimal QRP signal since they were only S3 at best here with their high powered signals. I bet some of our

members with big 160M antennas and/or living nearer the Atlantic Ocean did bag some EU contacts with thier QRP signals though.

From Don WA3ZBJ #1905 - Once a week, the Daytona Beach Amateur Radio Club (www.dbara.org) sets up portable stations in a public park somewhere in Eastern Volusia County, Florida. With signs indicating "AMATEUR RADIO DEMONSTRATION", the public is invited to come by for all the introduction they can stand from a most social group of portable operators and frequently a larger group of "supervisors" from the DBARA Club. Paul Milward, AB4PM, has skillfully orchestrated this activity that seems to be growing in popularity.

The most popular gear includes IC-706s or FT-857s feeding Buddipole antennas and powered by recycled wheel chair batteries that easily run a 100 watt rig for hours. Flying in the face of their success, there is this one fellow who has been setting up his 1975 Heathkit HW-7, early SW30 or Wilderness Radio Sierra to demonstrate the potential of low power and simple antennas in a public setting. Power comes from an old motorcycle battery for the QRP gear.

Strung between palm trees and supported by a portable fiberglass telescoping pole, the antennas used for the QRP gear should certainly qualify for our NAQCC mantra of "simple wire antennas": either a 30 meter "magnet wire" dipole or a 40-20-15 meter hook-up wire dipole with alligator clips separating the band sections. Who knows, maybe the weekly participants will be soon trading in their really nice commercial QRO transceivers for a Elecraft K1? Hi Hi

- **From Martin K0BXB #2146 -** Back in December the Hendricks DC-40A QRP kit caught my attention. Not expecting much out of it except some fun, I ordered it. Two weeks ago it came. I spent all weekend soldering it together. Had a couple problems with instructions and a reverse-installed toroid but with those fixed, IT WORKED. I started out in ham radio back in 1958 crystal bound. But I was pretty skeptical whether in today's world of hi-tech rigs whether one could actually have a "real qso" at 1.2 watts output with both the transmit and receive frequencies predetermined by a little 2 inch by 3 inch circuit board and with a G5RVjr at about 25 feet.

But I have had four contacts with it, two of them actual rag chews! This has been about as much fun as anything I have done in ham radio for years. Special thanks to those other hams who are willing to listen to a tiny signal! Martin K0BXB in snowy SE Wisconsin

- **From Stan K4UK #0200 -** You have might have seen my article in Issue 9/10 2007 of The Keynote about the WARC Band Challenge. As noted therein, I ran QRP-only during all of 2007. So, I thought I might just add a little concerning my operation from Bermuda the last week of the year.

To celebrate our 50th Wedding Anniversary, my wife and I took a trip to Bermuda. We had spent our honeymoon on the island 50 years ago. A Canadian couple who had also been married on December 21, 1957, and who we met there in 1957 joined us at the Pompano Beach Club from December 24, 2007 to January 2, 2008.

I took along my Elecraft K2, my Ten-Tec Model 607 single lever paddle, a CI Model PS-3 power supply, a Yuasa NP7-12 Battery, a Schumacher Model WM-1562A Battery Charger, and a 20 Meter dipole. I strung the dipole up from the porch railing to a fence post. It was at most 5 feet above ground on the side of the hill, but a good 50 feet above the beach.

My operating was limited since we were there to enjoy the pleasant weather in VP9-land. Most of the time I operated QRP on the WARC bands. The built-in antenna tuner in the K2 was able to tune the 20 Meter dipole to an acceptable SWR on all bands. Being on the West end of the island, I had pretty fair propagation to the States, but essentially none to the East toward Europe.

I logged a total 18 QRP contacts including a most interesting one with KA3/PY7COU who was remotely operating a station in Bangor, PA from his home in Brazil. Also, I did have an 18 minute chat with Tom, WY3H on 20 Meters. However, I was running QRO (15 Watts) for that QSO.

I always enjoy the RAC Winter Contest, so for a couple hours on December 29, I ran CW and Phone on 40 and 20 Meters and made a total of 26 contacts. I was able to work stations in AB,

BC, ON, QC and SK. For the Straight Key Night, I turned the paddle on its side and made 3 contacts on January 1, 2008.

Also on that evening, I contacted Buddy, W4YE; Riley, K4ORD and Harry, KA3NZR, all fellows who help me with the FISTS QSL Bureau. And I did have a good copy on Frank, N4FEG, another guy who helps with the Bureau. I gave him a 5 by 3 signal report on 20 Meter phone. But unfortunately Frank had a high noise level and could not copy me. So I made up an SWL card for him. Hi!

This year I operated QRP in the FISTS WARC Band Challenge. My operation that last week of the year from K4UK/VP9 did provide me with three new grid squares for the Challenge: K4TWJ in EM63, K4BAI in EM72 and WA2BSW in EM73. So, I ended up with a total of 112 Grid multipliers and 446 QRP contacts on the WARC Bands during 2007. This earned me two certificates: Third place overall and First place QRP. (And don't forget your NAQCC 30-30 Award as well, Stan - K3WWP)

I find it great fun to run QRP and am always surprised as to what I can accomplish running just 5 Watts into a simple wire antenna. Keep pounding the brass. 72, Stan K4UK

- **From Rem, K6BBQ, #1644 -** I thought I would respond to John's plea for members to send in their accomplishments.

January 2008 was my first month operating ONLY CW. Out of two years on CW, this was my first time doing only CW. I operated portable four to five times.

After my last QSO for January was in the log, I counted the QSOs. I had 49 CW QSOs. Of those 49 QSOs, a surprising 31 were QRP! It is amazing what can be done during such poor propagation conditions.

This is also the first time that I have made a QSO every day of the month! A couple of times I missed the GMT date deadline but those days still had a QSO made before midnight in my time zone. So I got a little flexible since I was trying so hard and this was my first time tackling a goal like this.

I may have had more CW QSOs in one month from some contest activity but I don't think I have ever had 30 QRP QSOs in a month. I was surprised. The QSOs were mostly ragchews, my favorite. Athough there were some contest type QSOs, like the ones I made during the Polar Bear QRP club's monthly portable event, and one or two other contests. I am not always able to operate each day, so this was also a real treat!

In addition this month, I also had CW QRP QSOs with Hawaii, Alaska, Vermont and several other states. The firsts were Hawaii and Vermont. I was really excited after I made these. The Vermont QSO was a bigger MPW ratio than the Hawaii one and it was also a ragchew QSO as opposed to the Hawaii QSO. This wasn't the first QRP QSO with Alaska, but it is always nice to know my five watts from Northern California is making it up to the hams in the frozen tundra.

Next, I hope to tackle the QRP QSO A DAY AWARD, sometime soon. I am also going to start keeping track of my previous and current QSOs for some of the other great QRP awards.

So not very exciting, but a first for this CW op and part time QRPer. I try QRP first but if conditions are bad and I am not getting heard, I will QRO anywhere up to 100 watts. 72, Rem

- **From Rick AA4W #1628 -** About two years ago I bought a 45-watt solar power kit from Harbor Freight. I got busy with other things and have had it stored in the garage. I finally got

around to trying it out and modifying it so I could install it permanently.

The specs on the system are: 3 panels at 15 watts each, No load output voltage 23.57, Volts Loaded voltage 14.5, Volts Maximum output 3 Amps

As you can see from the attached pictures, I mounted the panels on a shed roof, near my shack. I am currently using a deep cycle battery for storage. This battery is rated at 110 Amp Hours. I plan to replace this with two 6 volt golf car batteries. I also built a monitor box to watch the battery voltage and the current from the panels to the battery. I bought the meters off Ebay at $4.99 per unit.

Here in Florida we are blessed with more sunny days than up north but the system still charges the battery on overcast days but at a lower rate. On a sunny day the average output of the array is 2 amps. It is lower in the mornings and late afternoons. During the middle of the day, when the sun is directly above the panels I have seen the output as high as 2.8 amps.

Figuring an average of 2 amps/hour for 10 hours (winter sunlight here in Florida) the system gives me the capability of putting 20 AmpHours into the battery per day.

My FT-817 draws 450 milliamps on receive and 2 Amps on transmit. In a QSO you only transmit half the time. So the AmpHour requirement drops. Assuming a QSO lasts 20 minutes, I will only be transmitting for 10 minutes and the power required for the transmitter will only be .3 AmpHours. So, the total power required for the FT-817 for an hour of operation, with one QSO, is .75 AmpHour. This leaves plenty of capacity to run other accessories in the shack.

I can run my Icom 746 PRO at 50 watts output for 4 hours before I reach the breakeven point between what the charger is putting in the battery and what the radio is taking out.

I checked Harbor Freights' web site and see that the kit is currently on sale for $199. The

model number is 90599-1VGA. Here is the link to their site: http://www.harborfreight.com/

My web site has more information and additional pictures. It is: AA4W Website

If you have any questions feel free to drop me an Email at AA4W@arrl.net.

- **From Mark NK8Q #1156 -** Mac, W2TI (NAQCC #815), passed away on Friday, February 1, 2008. He lived in Highbridge, NJ. His son, Rob, contacted me last night to let me know. Rob is an electrical engineer but not a ham. I worked with Mac back in the mid-90's at Lockheed Martin in East Windsor, NJ. Mac was 64 years old and was a member for over 50 years of the ARRL as well as NAQCC.

We exchanged Christmas cards every year and without fail always met at the Cherryville (NJ) Hamfest in March. About 4 or 5 years ago he told me about a neat little project he had been working on, a kit called a RockMite from Small Wonder Labs. I figured that for $28 (plus a tin of Altoids) I couldn't go wrong. I determined it was the "best bang for the buck" in ham radio when I was finished with my first RockMite-40.

My first QSO with it was with a station in Delaware that I heard calling CQ and I couldn't find my paddles or straight key but I tapped two wires together for that contact! After I found my paddles I worked about 37 states and a couple of countries with it over the span of several months and it rekindled my interest in CW & QRP. Since then I've purchased several RM's that I've given away as well as having one on 20m. I've also since purchased and built a fully loaded (QRP) Elecraft K2 and a KX1 was a Christmas present from my XYL just over one year ago. I've become active doing some hiking on the Appalachian Trail and am a founding member of a group of hams that are called "Polar Bears". None of this would have been happened had I not met Mac at the Cherryville Hamfest that year!

I'll miss Mac, especially when I go to the Cherryville Hamfest this year. It was always interesting to visit with him and hear what he was tinkering with. It usually involved some QRP project or some vintage equipment such as an old Hallicrafters HT-37 or his much beloved R-390A. I'm not sure his activity was so much for getting on the air much because I think his antenna was an 80m dipole about 8 to 10' off the ground, while running QRP, but he mostly had fun tinkering with the equipment. He had a RockMite on 80m as well, but I wasn't ever able to hear him the few times we tried.

Knowing of his interest in QRP, CW I invited him to join our QCWA Chapter 17 group for Field Day the last couple of years because we were doing it QRP style but he declined, insisting that he preferred to operate alone. I sure wish he had joined us. He was definitely a minimalist if I ever saw one. I think I realized this when working with him and we would chat on the 440 MHz FM band. His signal was never really up to par, but he had fun getting into the repeater when he was at the top of a hill and then he would fade out as he went downhill. If any of us on the repeater would hear a crackling signal we always knew it was Mac!

I'm not sure if anyone else in the group here knew Mac, but I for one will miss him! 73, Mark, NK8Q

The publication of our next newsletter will be announced via email to all members for whom we have a valid email address unless they specifically have unsubscribed from the email.

Unless otherwise credited, all items are written by K3WWP.

If you came directly to this newsletter, we invite you now to browse the NAQCC Web Site.